



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Health

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STATE HEALTH COMMISSIONER

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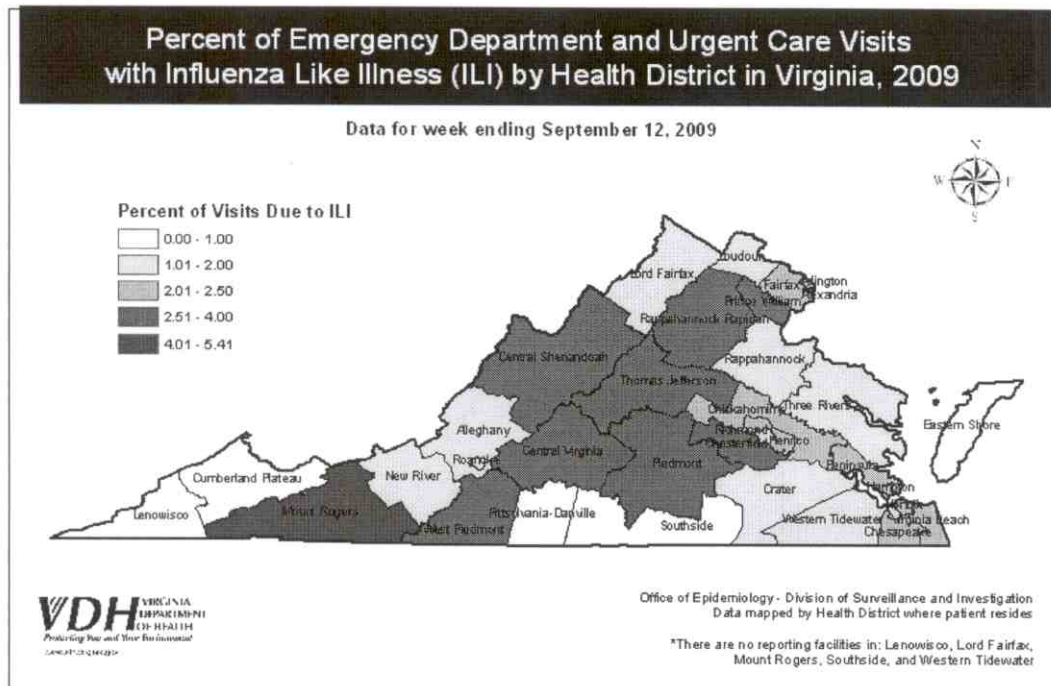
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September 18, 2009

Dear Colleague:

Influenza-driven activities are starting to accelerate in Virginia. I want you to know that the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is available to support your efforts in a variety of ways and values your partnership.

This week **Surveillance** has shown an increase in influenza activity from “Regional Activity” to “Widespread Activity” which means that influenza is present in more than three of Virginia’s five regions. This is the highest level of activity and is unusual for this time of year. Please continue to report suspected influenza outbreaks to your local health department.



Clear **Communication** with the public about novel H1N1 is important. The VDH Inquiry Center (1-877-ASK-VDH3) and PHIC@vdh.virginia.gov continues to field questions about novel H1N1, especially about vaccine availability. The Inquiry Center staff use a “Frequently Asked Questions” document that is updated several times a week to provide consistent, accurate information. You may find this “FAQ” document a helpful tool for your staff to use to respond

to patient's information needs. It is available on our VDH website at http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/DiseasePrevention/H1N1/pdf/PHIC_FAQ.pdf.

Antiviral medication in the **Direct Clinical Care** of patients with novel H1N1 infection is recommended to be started within 48 hours of symptom onset for those with more severe disease (for example, requiring hospitalization), for those at higher risk for complications from influenza, and for those with other clinical indications. Unfortunately, the in-office **rapid flu tests cannot reliably detect or exclude novel H1N1**, so clinical diagnosis is an important component of care. For more about the limitations of rapid flu tests, see http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/rapid_testing.htm.

Community Mitigation efforts include actions to decrease the likelihood of the spread of disease in the business and medical office setting. Helpful tips can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/10steps.htm>.

Over 2600 sites have been pre-registered in Virginia as potential novel H1N1 **Vaccination** providers. Pre-registration is available to any prescribing official (M.D. or D.O. licensed in Virginia) at www.vdh.virginia.gov. Final registration steps will begin next week with information going out to all those who have pre-registered. Final registration will include 1) agreeing to the terms and conditions outlined in the Provider Agreement and the Provider Profile, 2) will require that the vaccinator/site have adequate vaccine storage capacity and 3) will require that vaccine doses be reported via the Virginia Immunization Information System (VIIS) or, for sites with an electronic medical record, via downloaded compatible electronic files for importation into VIIS. The VDH Division of Immunization is working with interested vaccinators to make reporting requirements as easy as possible. For more information, check out our Novel H1N1 Vaccinator Questions at http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/DiseasePrevention/H1N1/pdf/H1N1_Vaccine_Registration_FAQs.pdf.

As always, thank you for all you do for the men, women and children in Virginia! All Virginians have an important part to play in minimizing the effects of this new virus, but the role of the medical community is paramount. Please know that those of us in public health appreciate your work, dedication and compassion. Thank you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Gruber", written in a cursive style.

State Health Commissioner